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Can San Diego Go From Toilet to Tap?

Sanders proposes plan to turn wastewater into drinking water

By [Lauren Steussy](#) | Thursday, Jun 30, 2011 | Updated 3:19 PM PDT



Here's a thought: To solve San Diego's water problem, how about flushing our wastewater right back into the tap?

It may sound a bit repulsive, but Mayor Jerry Sanders believes with the right treatment, this solution could help provide nearly a third of San Diego's drinking water supply.

Sanders announced the idea Thursday afternoon at an event kicking off a pilot project that will test the recycled water plan.

He stood with other members of the city and Marsi Steirer, project director of Indirect Potable Re-use, the pilot project which will begin next week.

The plan will first be tested for a year at the city's water advanced water purification facility, located at 4949 Eastgate Mall.

"Like in many places where recycled water is a fact of life, San Diego has elected to move beyond its fear and let science do the talking," Sanders said.

At the end of the pilot project, the city will produce a report, which will reveal whether they can safely recycle wastewater into drinking water. Sanders hopes that the water treatment process will be able to make San Diego less dependent on outsourced water for drinking. He and other city officials also believe that the facility will be able to treat wastewater flowing into the ocean in order to prevent pollution.

The wastewater will go through five stages of purification. During Thursday's announcement, Steirer drank from a glass holding the recycled water.

If the pilot project produces successful results, the city will construct a full-scale facility. Such a facility would produce 16 million gallons of water for San Diego – roughly a third of the water used, Steirer said.

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